

# REL2300: Introduction to World Religions

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Spring 2018  
3 Credit Hours

**Instructor:** Bhakti Mamtora

**Online Office Hours:** Tuesday & Thursday 10:00am to 11:30am on Skype: bhaktim14  
& by appointment

**Class Meeting Time:** None (pay attention to strict deadlines outlined below)

**Prerequisite Knowledge:** None

Teaching Assistants	Online Office Hours (in-person office hours available upon request)	Skype ID
Venu Mehta	M/F 11:00am – 12:30pm	venumehta6382
Yekatit/Ikram Tsehayu	Wednesday: 2:00-3:30pm Friday: 3:00-4:30pm	Yekatit1 / Yekatit

**Please contact your instructor and TA using the Conversations (Inbox) tool in Canvas. For information on how to do this view the following [Conversations](#) section of the [Student Guide](#).**

## Course Goals

Upon completing this course you will be able to:

- Explain basic worldviews, rituals, and beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Chinese religions, Japanese religions, Indigenous Religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism.
- Problematize the category of religion and identify your own working definitions.
- Identify the social, political, and cultural factors that come into play in the formation and understanding of a given religion.
- Equipped with this knowledge of different religious traditions, and the contexts in which they thrive, identify your own vantage point, as well as engage with different cultures and countries in an informed, respectful manner

*All module level learning objectives are provided within the individual modules throughout the course.*

## Course Readings and Required Texts

- A Concise Introduction to World Religions: Third Edition - edited by Willard G. Oxtoby and Alan F. Segal. Oxford University Press 2015.

*Other supplemental materials, such as videos will be provided on the course website.*

## Instructional Methods

There are readings, videos, and other materials for each course module, but this course is designed to be as interactive as possible. As a member of this class, you are required to contribute to weekly discussion posts and responses based on the material each week. Quizzes will also test your basic comprehension of the material in each course module. Please see the **Modules** tab to view all the videos, readings and other course materials. The deadlines for all assignments and quizzes are clearly stated in Canvas (in the Calendar and below the Syllabus). You will take a midterm and final exam, and complete a final paper.

## Course Requirements and Policies

### Quizzes

Weekly quizzes will be administered in Canvas. You can access them in the Modules tool, in the Module pages, or through Assignments. The first quiz is a quiz covering your syllabus and Start Here section. You are responsible for completing your quizzes by 11:59 pm on the due date. Quizzes are non-cumulative and are worth **20%** of your overall grade.

Once you have completed the readings and discussion and viewed the lectures for that week, make sure you study this material thoroughly. After you've studied the material, you should be ready to take the quiz. The quiz is timed, so it is necessary for you to know all the material prior to starting the quiz (**i.e., there will not be enough time to look up each answer in your notes, so you should prepare as if your notes were not available to you**). You will have 10 minutes to complete each quiz.

If you are still taking the quiz when the quiz due date passes, you will not be allowed to finish your quiz - it will auto-submit. Thus, you **MUST** take the quiz **BEFORE** the deadline listed. No makeups are allowed, except for medical or family emergencies, however there will be two opportunities for extra credit.

***If you have any trouble with your quiz, you must contact the UF Computing Help Desk immediately at 352-392-4357 option 2. Once you have done so, email your instructor and TA immediately with the details of your problem along with your Help Desk ticket number.***

Before taking your first quiz, view the [Canvas video tutorial on taking quizzes](#).

### Online Discussion Postings

Every week students are expected to post a minimum of two responses/reflections to the online course discussion forums in Canvas. These forums are only available to the instructors and other students enrolled in the course. One post will be a reflection to the course readings and/or lectures required for that week. The other will be a response to a fellow classmate. The student should feel free to compose posts on a topic that most interests him or her from the readings and/or videos for that week. A few example topics will be made available to students should selecting a topic prove too difficult.

**Note:** You must cite both one of the videos and the text in your initial post. This is not required in the follow up response, however.

**For credit, the reflection post must be made by Wednesday at 11:59 pm. Follow up responses must be made by Friday at 11:59pm (unless specified otherwise in the Due Dates below).**

There will be a few occasions where the due dates will change due to University holidays. All posts should be articulate, well thought out and adhere to the rules of grammar, punctuation and spelling of the English language. Each of your **initial posts** should be at least 250 words. They should be respectful, well written, and carefully edited and should exhibit your analytical thinking. The **second response post** should be between **100-200 words** and follow the same respect and grammar guidelines as the first post. Additional posts beyond these two can be of any length. All posts should be courteous, academic, and non-aggressive. Rude and demeaning online behavior will not be tolerated for any reason and could adversely affect your grade. While students may certainly be critical, such critical responses and observations should be presented in a professional and academic manner. Students are encouraged to make multiple (relevant) posts, although this is not mandatory. These discussion posts will comprise of 30% of your overall grade for the course. You can use audio, video, and/or written mediums of communication in the discussion section. Please be warned that glaring factual inaccuracies will result with you receiving a 0 for that particular discussion response.

Before completing your first discussion post, view the [Canvas tutorial on posting to discussions](#). Your posts must include citations.

### **Final Paper**

You will be required to complete a fieldwork project for this course. The project consists of several parts including two site visits, a web analysis, an interview, and a 6-8-page reflection paper, which summarizes your findings. The purpose of this assignment is *not* to convert you to any particular tradition but for you to experience a different religious tradition in ways that cannot be explained through a textbook or video. It also gives you the opportunity to learn about the different cultures and traditions that are available in your community. It is advised that you begin this project as soon as possible because unlike similar observation papers, this paper includes several parts. This paper is worth **20%** of your total grade. **No late papers will be accepted.** However, students with extenuating circumstances and with permission from the instructor may turn in a late paper. Late papers will be deducted 1/3 a letter grade off for each day the paper is past due and for a maximum of three days, after which papers will not be accepted.

### **Midterm Exam**

This course will conduct a midterm exam that will be administered online via Canvas. The exam will only cover concepts in the first half of the class (Modules 1-7), and the questions will consist of a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, matching and so forth. Once started, students will have 40 minutes to complete the midterm exam. The midterm exam will comprise **15%** of your overall grade for the course. Additional details on the midterm exam will be provided later in the semester. All course activities will be conducted via Canvas (<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>).

### **Final Exam**

This course will conduct a final exam that will be administered online via Canvas. The exam will only cover concepts in the second half of the class (Modules 8-11), and the questions will consist of a mixture of multiple choice, true/false, matching and so forth. Once started, students will have 45 minutes to complete the final exam. The final exam will comprise **15%** of your overall grade for the course. Additional details on the final exam will be provided later in the semester. All course activities will be conducted via Canvas (<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>).

### **Course Technology**

Frequent access to a computer with a good broadband connection is required. See the [Start Here](#) section for details on the technology used in the class.

## University Policies

### *University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities*

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with the [Dean of Students Office \(Links to an external site.\)](#). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

### *University Policy on Academic Misconduct*

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the [UF Student Honor Code \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

### *A Note on Plagiarism*

All written assignments including discussion posts and papers must include the proper method of citation from the citation style of your choosing. Please see <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> for more information on how to cite your work.

## Grading Breakdown

Quizzes: 20%

Discussion Reflection/Response Postings: 30%

Final Paper: 20%

Midterm Exam: 15%

Final Exam: 15%

Please see the [Assignments](#) tool for the points value of each assignment. Grades will be made available in the [Grades](#) tool shortly after each assignment is graded.

## Grading Scale

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D/PASS
Points	93-100	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	65-69

**F/FAIL** 64 and below

For more information about UF's minus grade system visit:  
<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

